

## Sharing Your Message: Sample OpEd

Below is a sample article written for the Opinion/Editorial (OpEd) section of a local newspaper. Newspaper Op/Ed sections include articles written by experts in certain fields, offering a viewpoint on current events and hot topics.

A few points to keep in mind when adapting this OpEd or writing one of your own:

- ☆ **Choose the right “messenger.”** Consider carefully who should sign the OpEd piece. Articles like the one below are most effective when coming from a well-known, trusted member of the community. If a known individual is not an option, consider how your target audience will respond to the messenger’s profession and, if applicable, the name of his or her organization when making your decision.
- ☆ **Make it relevant.** Be sure to take into account local data, culture, and parenting norms or practices. Make sure your recommendations are realistic for your community.
- ☆ **Be aware of word count limitations.** Call the newspaper before submitting, if necessary, to ensure your OpEd is not too long.

### Community Solutions for Kids\*

*By [Your Local Messenger Here]*

Parents are children’s first teachers, but not their only teachers. Childcare providers, teachers, doctors, neighbors, coaches, and grandparents all influence children as well. The quality and stability of young children’s relationships affect virtually all aspects of their development. Children learn a lot in their early years—they learn respect for others, right from wrong, and how to get along with each other. All the people they come in contact with can help reinforce this learning and influence their long-term development.

Surround a child with secure relationships and stimulating experiences, and he will incorporate that environment to become a confident, caring adult, ready to be a part of society. But if he is surrounded by violence or given little intellectual or emotional stimulation, it will be much more difficult for him to grow up successfully. As members of the community, we should each ask ourselves: Are we providing the kind of environments that will allow children to grow into citizens who give back to communities?

Imagine coming home from the hospital with your new baby and having no family members nearby and no close ties to your neighbors. Imagine that these stresses are compounded by financial worries and a job in jeopardy. The loneliness and stress would put a strain on the most loving parent and could cause parents to neglect a child due to their own despair. Social isolation is common for new parents, often struggling to figure out how to juggle jobs and parenting. But it doesn’t have to be that way.

Some communities are working to prevent problems before they start by developing neighborhood ties that can bring people together. Some are creating playgroups for new families held at community centers, local libraries, or schools. At these groups, parents meet others who are having the same experiences, and they build relationships that can lead to long-term friendships and support. Other communities are working with health professionals to provide at-home visits to new parents to help them adjust to the new demands of parenthood and provide a link to the community. From financial assistance, to safe places for children to play, to better housing, there are many ways that communities can support families.

Children do well when their parents do well. And parents do better when they live in communities that actively support families. We can all play a positive part. Contact [your organization] to talk to some people already working in this community.

\* Adapted with permission from Prevent Child Abuse America.

